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SUBJECT: Canton Export Commodities Fair: Not Just Exports Anymore

(U) This cable is Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶1. (U) Premier Wen Jiabao - with Vice Premier Wu Yi and Minister of Commerce Bo Xilai in attendance - announced at the October 15 opening ceremony of the 100th session of the Canton Export Commodities Fair that the Fair will be renamed the Canton Import and Export Commodities Fair. Premier Wen commented that the name change signals the desire of China to achieve a basic balance between imports and exports.

¶2. (SBU) The Premier offered no details on how the name change would concretely affect the Fair. It could well be just an attempt to shed China's image as an export-oriented economy and thus a measure to deflect criticism of its perennial trade surpluses. However, if representatives of foreign import companies are permitted to participate in the upcoming April Commodities Fair, it would signal a significant shift in the character of the Fair, and reinforce the Government's efforts to promote domestic consumption and adjust its trade imbalance - all of which would be good for U.S. business and for China's following through on its commitment to enhance market access. In his speech, Premier Wen also highlighted the need for IPR protection, observance of WTO rules, and the need to refine foreign-related economic laws and regulations.

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